

floor in frustration regarding the continued delay of floor action on the Major Richard Star Act.

H.R. 1282 would expand eligibility to certain military retirees for concurrent receipt of veterans' disability compensation and retired pay or combat-related special compensation.

In the past, military servicemembers found to have endured a service-connected disability could not collect their pension and disability pay in unison. This was unfair.

To receive VA disability compensation, veterans had to forfeit their retirement benefits and pay back dollar-for-dollar the amount that would have been owed to them if they had received both benefits.

In the fiscal year 2004 National Defense Authorization Act, Congress created the Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay program. In doing so, veterans who are 100 percent disabled were authorized to receive both earned benefits—which is right—known as concurrent receipt, for the first time ever.

Since then, the law has expanded the eligibility to receive military retirement pay and their VA disability pay concurrently to military retirees with 20 or more years of service and a 50 percent or higher disability rating.

Under current law, concurrent receipt for military retirees who have a disability rating of 50 percent or higher was phased in through 2014.

While that certainly marked tremendous progress, medically retired veterans with less than 20 years of service who were wounded in combat must still offset their DOD retirement pay by their VA disability compensation. So unfair. So unjust.

Many of these veterans had the full intention of serving 20 or more years and gain full retirement benefits, but through no fault of their own, were unable to due to their service and sacrifice in the line of duty. They were injured.

This group of retired veterans, also known as Chapter 61 retirees, are arguably the most at-risk because of their complex combat injuries and are just as deserving as those who served greater than 20 years of service.

By creating the CRDP, I firmly believe that Congress admitted that the offset required of disabled veterans was wrong. Approximately 550,000 military retirees are eligible to receive both military retired pay and VA disability compensation but are prohibited under the current guidelines of this program. We must change that.

In my view, I see these veterans as essentially being taxed for their service and sacrifice because they were deemed service-connected disabled. What an injustice that we must correct.

This is a very popular and desired policy fix, Mr. Speaker. The Richard Star Act has 335 cosponsors in the House and 66, and growing, in the United States Senate. Most veteran

service organizations, including the American Legion, the VFW, DAV, VVA, which is the Vietnam Veterans of America, AMVETS, Military Officers Association of America, Fleet Reserve Association, American Ex-Prisoners of War, and the Association of the Navy, strongly support this bill.

Given this support, why hasn't there been any action on this bill? The Richard Star Act got the required cosponsors necessary to get added to the Consensus Calendar back in September, but why has there been no action on this bill?

These are not just questions I have—it is not just me—but the cosponsors of the bill as well, and questions that many in the public have, including our heroes and their families that were affected.

Let's ask the Democratic leadership in the House and the Senate to consider the overwhelming public and congressional support for the Richard Star Act. Do not let this injustice continue. Please do not let this injustice continue.

We have a real opportunity, Mr. Speaker. Do right by these national heroes and include the Major Richard Star Act in the end-of-year omnibus. I can't think of a more worthy cause than honoring our commitment to our Nation's heroes.

□ 1100

CONGRATULATING ORLAND HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' FOOTBALL TEAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. LAMALFA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, first, I want to congratulate northern California's Orland High School. Their boys' football team just won the California State championship with a grueling 20-7 win, on a very muddy field at Orland Stadium, over Shafter High School.

Indeed, the muddy field affects both teams equally, and Orland was able to dig it out with a great running effort—159 yards by the quarterback in order to pull the victory off. He scored all three touchdowns.

It was, indeed, the first in many years of a State championship for Orland as they pulled this off in an amazing fashion after a lot of rain in northern California.

Congratulations to Orland High School boys for a great effort, going 15 and 0, and winning the CIF championship for all of California.

CALIFORNIA'S WATER SUPPLY

Mr. LAMALFA. Mr. Speaker, this is a topic I have spent a lot of time on here on this floor talking about. It is where our food supply comes from in this Nation. With the shortsighted efforts we have had by our regulators at the Federal and State levels, food is shorter in this country than it ever has been in quite a few years, and for no good reason.

As I point out on this chart here, my home State of California, many of our food products are grown in California that the U.S. relies upon. These products you see here, over 90 percent, some of them 100 percent, come from California.

If they weren't grown in California, they would have to come from somewhere else. We would have to import them. We would have to do without. We would have to switch to some other type of food product that we didn't like as well, or just have less choice.

Why is this happening? In part because the water supply for these farms has been around for decades and, indeed, the water systems in California, the Central Valley Project, which is Federal, the State water project, which is State level, were developed with harnessing the water that we have so plentiful in the north and using it throughout the State.

Indeed, in drought periods, these systems were designed to hold us through drought for up to 5 years when the dam was full beforehand in order to do what people need to farm their crops and take care of the needs of the cities, manufacturing, et cetera.

In California, of the 100 percent water pie, 50 percent goes for environmental needs. Fifty percent goes to keep fish colder and wetter, to let water run out to the Pacific, to keep the saltwater intrusion in the delta at bay, so to speak. Forty percent, traditionally, has gone to agriculture, and 10 percent is what has gone to urban and domestic use.

That 40 percent that agriculture has received has had a big bite taken out of it. Hundreds of thousands of acres have been idled in California, just in my area, in the north. At least 250,000 acres of rice crops alone, as well as other water supply that goes toward almonds, walnuts, prunes, and many other crops, has been taken away.

We want to blame the drought. Yes, we have had some level of drought. But in 2021, I would also remind you, we had a huge amount of rainfall in October and a vast snowpack in December 2021.

This year, we are enjoying a good amount of rainfall already in November and December, which will help replenish our lakes.

But what are the water managers, so to speak, in the Federal and State governments doing? Are they indeed keeping the water in the lakes so that we would have the ability to draw upon that water and continue farming crops in California?

Again, this isn't just for California farmers, for the California economy. This is something all Americans rely upon for these food products that are more numerous than I can even list on this chart here.

What is happening in my northern part of the State, the Klamath Basin that I also share on the Oregon side with my good colleague, Mr. BENTZ?

The last few years they have taken the water supply from the farmers up

there in that basin, in the Klamath Basin project—this is a project that was built over 100 years ago to make more water available solely for agriculture from the Klamath Lake. That is the original lake with an additional supply.

Yet, the Bureau of Reclamation and environmental organizations and agencies believe that is their water to take and try to mitigate fish issues in the Klamath River. This kind of attitude has shifted all the way through the Klamath, on down to the Sacramento River.

The Bureau of Reclamation needs to get its act together and be reminded, again and again, that the Klamath project was developed for agriculture, not to help mitigate fish issues that, truly, probably can't really be solved.

On top of that, another thing the people of Klamath and the Siskiyou and northern California area are suffering is that they want to remove the dams that make hydroelectric power on the Klamath River by making a regulatory scheme that is almost impossible for them to renew the licenses.

That is how government does it. They make it too costly, too impossible to continue to stay in business via the permit process.

So, hydroelectric power is going to be less in California, which is already a tough thing on our power grid.

What is the big thing against the people of Klamath Basin? I don't understand. We need food. We need electricity.

RECOGNIZING FINCASTLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Fincastle Volunteer Fire Department for 75 years of service.

Since its beginning in 1947, the Fincastle Volunteer Fire Department has been a 100 percent volunteer organization and remains strong with 30 volunteers currently.

These brave men and women play a crucial role in working alongside Botetourt County Fire and EMS services, offering critical localized emergency fire prevention and mitigation support for the people of Fincastle.

The volunteers who serve as firefighters and EMTs within the department go through extensive training, giving up their time, energy, and safety to help others.

Working alongside the firefighters and EMTs are support personnel who perform the vital administrative work and fundraising that keeps the station functioning.

They are led by current officers Chief Dustin Ware, Deputy Chief Ben Campbell, Captain Matthew Webster, Lieutenant Kyle Setliff, Lieutenant Frank Schermer, and Lieutenant Jordan Campbell.

The Fincastle Volunteer Fire Department's longevity stands as a testament

to the civic spirit of the town and an example we should all follow.

I thank the Fincastle Volunteer Fire Department for their selfless service and wish them another 75 years of success.

RECOGNIZING STUARTS DRAFT CHEERLEADING TEAM

Mr. CLINE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the Stuarts Draft Cougars cheer team for winning this year's Class 1 and 2 Virginia State cheerleading championship. This victory marks the program's fifth State title in 6 years.

The Cougars faced numerous hurdles to reach this victory, placing second behind Fort Defiance during the first round. However, before the second round began, Coach Tammy Carter told the team to be "the athletes they trained to be," and they did just that.

By focusing on what they needed to improve, the Cougars left it all on the mat and increased their score by 30½ points, earning the State title.

These talented athletes include Lexi Almarode, Addison Colvin, Jenna Comer, Sofia Coppola, Taylor Huffman, Zoe Mader, Zane Marshall, Abby Mikolay, Caydence Morris, Tarynn Morris, Baleigh Painter, Eiko Puckett, Olivia Puckett, Alyssa Sanner, Holly Stevens, A'mya Swats, and Natalie Thompson.

For six seniors on the team, Sofia, Zoe, Zane, Abby, Caydence, and Baleigh, this was their memory of cheering together, an outpouring of emotion hoisting the State championship trophy one final time.

Senior Zane Marshall said of his class' historic reign: "To have three [State championships], I don't even know how to feel. It is crazy," he said.

The seniors will leave their high school cheerleading careers with their heads held high, knowing their leadership and performance have left a lasting legacy on the team.

Congratulations to all the talented athletes and dedicated coaches on this incredible victory. They have earned it.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 8 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

PROCEEDINGS OF FORMER MEMBERS PROGRAM

The following proceedings were held before the House convened for morning-hour debate:

UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION OF FORMER MEMBERS OF CONGRESS 2022 ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

The meeting was called to order by the Honorable Dennis Ross, vice president of Former Members of Congress Association, at 8 a.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Margaret Grun Kibben, offered the following prayer:

Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or You brought forth the whole world from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. And so we pause in this place to acknowledge Your hand in the governing of our Nation.

We give thanks to You that from generation to generation and Congress to Congress, You have called men and women to serve in this House, upholding the values of freedom and liberty on which our country was founded. We honor their continued defense of the rights and welfare of the people and communities who make up these United States.

Call us, then, this day and every day, in office or out, to acknowledge the higher calling to which You call each of us, wherever You call each of us to be. May we ever live as agents of Your love, instruments of Your peace, and advocates of the hope You set before us. We pray this in Your most holy name.

Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable Dennis Ross led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mr. ROSS. I now ask the clerk to call the roll of all former and retiring Members.

The Clerk called the roll and the following Members were "present":

Mr. Altmire of Pennsylvania
Mr. Bartlett of Maryland
Ms. BOURDEAUX of Georgia
Mr. Capuano of Massachusetts
Mr. CHABOT of Ohio
Mr. Clay of Missouri
Mr. Cook of California
Mr. Davis of Tennessee
Mr. Davis of Virginia
Ms. Edwards of Maryland
Mr. Faso of New York
Mr. Graves of Georgia
Ms. Harman of California
Mr. Holt of New Jersey
Mr. Hutchinson of Arkansas
Mr. McEwen of Ohio
Ms. Morella of Maryland
Mr. Rick Nolan of Virginia
Mr. Paulsen of Minnesota
Mr. L.F. Payne of Virginia
Mr. Petri of Wisconsin
Mr. Quinn of New York
Mr. Ritter of Pennsylvania
Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN of Florida
Mr. Ross of Florida
Mr. SCHRADER of Oregon
Mr. Smith of Florida
Mr. Stearns of Florida
Mr. Stupak of Michigan
Mr. SUOZZI of New York
Mr. Tanner of Tennessee
Mr. UPTON of Michigan
Mr. Walker of Pennsylvania